

Economic Development/Marketing/Grants/CDBG Report

May 2022

Downtown Development News

- Wheeler has conducted ground testing and is putting the finishing touches on its site plan. Currently staff are discussing parking options with Wheeler.
- Wesley Cyr and Oliver Wilson are planning a groundbreaking for “City Place” which is expected to take place in June or July. The ECD Board will receive invitations for this event.
- ECD staff is working with JR and Leanne Rusgrove on an application for Enterprise Zone tax abatement based on their investment in the new Parkside Café space.
- The City is working to protect a limited number of off street parking spaces near the Route 72/Route 69 intersection in anticipation of the long-term reconstruction effort to realign this critical intersection.
- ECD staff is working with a longtime office furniture retail business from a neighboring community that is activity looking for significant square footage in the Bristol area. More to come very soon on a potential project.
- City staff are working with UHY Advisors – American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding consultant – on downtown projects funded with ARPA that include a parking structure on Hope Street, brownfield funding, and funding for Centre Square infrastructure.
- The Mayor’s efforts to secure State partnership on improving the Route 72/Riverside Ave./Park St. corridor continue. City staff recently traveled to a DOT office to discuss paving and a potential streetscape project. Importantly, a DOT Deputy Commissioner will visit Bristol in late May to see the corridor first hand.
- The Mayor’s Office and ECD staff are working on a new potential housing project at the “Funck” building and “Eagle” buildings at 238 and 222 Main Street.
- ECD staff is working with Comptroller to identify funding mechanism(s) for several downtown/Centre Square infrastructure projects. These include (1.) funding a large retaining wall on the slope of the train tracks (2.) designing and building a streetscape on Main Street to serve “City Place” and (3.) relocating Eversource electrical boxes/switches.
- Oma’s Pride is working on a Downtown Grant application to apply for remaining funds not utilized from the company’s initial application to relocate its distribution business to Valley Street.
- ECD staff is working with the owners of Jimmy’s on the River on a possible expansion project.
- ECD staff is working with a local food vendor on the possibility of renting a space on Park Street.
- ECD staff is working with Sowder’s Speed Shop, a new motorcycle repair facility that will open on Riverside Avenue soon.
- ECD is working with the Realtor representing the former Parkside Café space on several possible tenants.
- A monthly update on the J.H. Sessions project will be provided at the May meeting.

- SLR Consulting is working directly with our Land Use officials on site plan for the City Hall/BPD/U.S. Post Office parking structure.

Development outside Downtown

- ECD staff have been working on the recently completed round of ARPA funding for for-profit, non-profit, and City projects. In addition, ECD staff are working on a forthcoming second round of funding via a custom grant program called the *Building Bristol ARPA Program*.
- ECD is working with two manufacturing operations currently located outside Bristol on relocating to Lot #3 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park and a parcel of land located between “ESPN North” and the Southeast Bristol Business Park. More to come very soon.
- A very quick update on the project at 894 Middle Street will occur at the May board meeting.
- Wireless Shop LLC has officially closed on the former “Nuchies” building and working on floor plans for its project to convert the space to its corporate headquarters.
- Route 6:
 - Aroma Joe’s is open
 - The Dairy Queen project scheduled for Route 6 continues although the project will be delayed for a period of time.
 - We are speaking with the developer for the former Ruby Tuesday’s property on its effort to bring a new Starbucks and Chipotle restaurant to the site.
 - We continue to communicate with the owner of the large “farm” property directly east of the “Bristol Farms” plaza about interested parties looking to commercially develop the site. The developer is very close on a large announcement of which the ECD-funded traffic study to secure a traffic light will prove integral to development.

Small Business/Manufacturing Technical Assistance Grants Completed or In Process

- Pizza Italia (formerly Amano’s Pizza) on Wolcott Street.
- L&R Mechanical Services – To assist with the company’s relocation to Broad Street from a nearby community
- The Roasted Bean – To assist with the company’s expansion next door to its original location
- Cost Cutters Franchisee – To assist with the franchise owner’s buildout at Bristol Plaza
- Manufacturing Tech Assistance New for 2022: Colonial Spring for Dept. of Defense Certification
- Manufacturing Tech Assistance New for 2022: Metal Finishing Technologies for “ITAR” certification to grow aerospace business
- Manufacturing Tech Assistance New for 2022: Quality Wire for “ITAR” certification to grow aerospace business

“Urban Jobs” Tax Abatement – State Assisted

- Novo Precision will receive the State-sponsored five-year, 80% abatement to assist in its recent purchase of 215 Dolphin Road, bringing the number of properties occupied by Novo to three on Dolphin Road!

Marketing

Marketing and Public Relations Initiatives:

- 1) All City Hall departments have moved to temporary spaces – City Hall East (the former Webster Bank) and City Hall West (the former Courthouse above the Police Station). City Hall is now closed to the public, all public meetings will be conducted in the Bristol Public Library, Conference/Meeting Room at City Hall West, and at the Bristol Board of Education Auditorium until City Hall renovations are completed.
- 2) ECD staff and the Mayor continue to visit Bristol businesses, several that have transpired in the last month include BHF Logistics, The Roasted Bean (in new location), The American Clock & Watch Museum, Family Roots, and Lake Compounce.
- 3) As construction of City Place, Wheeler Health and City Hall renovations begin at Centre Square, new downtown parking areas for the public are being developed along with a map for the community to be aware of where they can park to access downtown businesses as well as the Farmers Market – an agreement between Bristol Health and the City is being finalized and marketing and public relations is being developed to communicate the information to the community.
- 4) New Businesses that celebrated openings this past month – see news articles in Communications:
 - Aroma Joe's, located at 1235 Farmington Avenue
 - Magpie's, located at 751 Terryville Avenue
 - Pizza Italia, located at 102 Wolcott Road (the former Amano's Pizza)
 - J's Auto Sales & Repair, located at 114 Farmington Avenue (the former Meineke)
- 5) Business anniversaries that were celebrated in April and the beginning of May include:
 - First Congregational Church – 275 years
 - Bristol Adult Resource Center (BARC) – 65 years
 - Barnes Group – 165 years

Grants Administration

New Grant Applications:

- Two grants were submitted to the Thomaston savings Bank Foundation for the 2022 cycle.
- We had a very positive interview with two members of the Allocations Committee concerning the Police Department's request for funding a Service Dog program from the Main Street Community Foundation.

Upcoming Opportunities:

- Information is forthcoming on the Federal Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act, which will be available through the state's councils of government (COGs).

- Multiple opportunities are on the horizon for other transportation and infrastructure grants. The Grants Administrator is meeting weekly with the Mayor to discuss potential projects and applications for funding.

CDBG Program Highlights

CDBG Year 47: The third quarter of Year 47 is complete.

CDBG Year 48: Fifteen applications for 2022 CDBG funds were received. Two Public Hearings have been held, but further action is awaiting notification of the Year 48 allocation from HUD. We have been advised that notification should arrive on or around May 15.

CDBG-CARES Act grants: There is a total of \$81,961.75 unexpended to date, and \$694,768.25 has been expended by recipients of the two rounds of Covid-related CDBG funding. Bristol is ahead of most communities in spending these specially-designated funds.